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2. *The Caucasus.* By Captain DUNCAN CAMERON, F.R.G.S., late H.B.M. Vice-Consul at Redout Kaleh, and now Consul at Abyssinia.

IN this paper, after a recapitulation of the mythical marvels of the Caucasus, such as the Golden Fleece, the Amazons, and Prometheus, to which some still existing legends bear distant affinity, the author treated upon its more recent history, the geographical features of the country, and the peculiarities of its tribes.

The tribes are exceedingly numerous, diverse, and hardly admitting of classification. For example: the Cossacks, who occupy the northern face of the Caucasus, date some centuries back, when large bodies of that restless race moved down from their own plains to those of the Dnieper and Don, and thence to the Terek, where, carrying off the daughters of the inhabitants in a Sabine marriage, they formed a mixed race, which has been continually recruited from the Don or Ukraine. Disposed in regiments along the military lines, they vie with the original inhabitants, whose customs they have in great measure adopted, in their bold bearing, showy accoutrements, and daring deeds of partisan warfare; and they furnish an imposing complement to the regular army of the Caucasus. Beyond these are Tartars, originally settled by the sea of Azof, whose history shows four migrations in two centuries.

In selecting one of the numerous races touched upon by Captain Cameron, as characteristic of the more truly aboriginal inhabitants, we may take the Tcherkess. Their constitution is strictly feudal. Society is divided into several classes of nobles, the principal of whom are of Arab descent, intermediate classes of freemen, and into serfs. As in Europe during the middle ages, every freeman is expected to be under the protection of a seigneur. The young Tcherkess is not educated at home, but is entrusted to a neighbour, under whom he is perfected in gentle bearing, eloquence, and martial exercises. Each great noble is attended by a sort of squire of the inferior nobility, whose duty is to fight by his side. The Tcherkess thus form a regular and numerous Moslem chivalry. They are turbulent, but brave, and lovers of liberty; they have popular assemblies, where the interests of the community are freely discussed both by the princes and the better class of elder peasants; for a great respect is shown to age. The Tcherkess country is still a seat of the slave-trade, for which it has been noted since the days of Herodotus, and its influence has sunk so deeply into the institutions of the people, that the chief privilege of a seigneur over the peasants of the lower class, is the right of disposing of their issue. Neither the Tcherkess nor many others of the Caucasian tribes

were devoted to Schamyl; on the contrary, they looked on his leveling system of government with suspicion and dislike. "It was a rule of priests," they said, "and they were princes." It was only among the democratic tribes that Schamyl had great power.

The paper concludes with a short account of the exports and imports of the Caucasus. Among the curiosities of the latter is found the well known "*poudre de Perse*" for killing insects, which has vastly increased in demand. In imports, the cotton goods of Switzerland rival those of England. Petroleum is an abundant natural production, but it is not brought into the market to such an extent as its importance appears to demand. The total average export of the Caucasus is 192,777*l.*, and import 662,684*l.* This, however, gives an incomplete idea of the movement of its commerce, for the Caucasus is a world in itself, and there is a large exchange of products between different provinces, towns, and villages, each of which has frequently its own speciality.

The CHAIRMAN said, his friend Captain Cameron had made an attempt to do that which he (the Chairman) ventured to tell him it was impossible to accomplish, namely, to combine in one short paper the mythology, history, geography, and ethnology of a vast and very diversified country. The paper, however, contained much of a valuable and interesting character, and he begged to thank Captain Cameron for his contributions. The Chairman then called upon Sir Henry Rawlinson and Mr. Danby Seymour, who were acquainted with the region, to address the Society.

SIR HENRY RAWLINSON, K.C.B., said, that during the last two years, in his journey to and from Persia, he had had the opportunity of passing and repassing the Trans-Caucasian provinces. Their geographical features could be described in a few words. There was, in the first place, a rich alluvial plain on the shores of the Black Sea—the ancient Colchis, watered by the Phasis and its tributaries, and covered for the most part with dense forest and luxuriant vegetation. At the distance of 40 or 50 miles from the sea, a chain of hills run down from the Caucasus towards Ararat, and from the summit of these hills the plateau sloped gradually down for 500 or 600 miles to the Caspian. This plateau was generally of a stern and barren character, but the valley of the Cyrus river was well cultivated throughout, and there was a certain belt of forest running through the country in a north-west and south-east direction, of extraordinary beauty. The southern slopes again, of the great range of Caucasus, broken into innumerable valleys, and studded with villages and vineyards, presented a landscape of surprising loveliness. The range of hills running south from the Caucasus to Akhaltzik, beyond Kotais, were especially remarkable for their beauty: he had never indeed seen or heard of mountain scenery elsewhere of a more magnificent or picturesque character. Ethnologists found many subjects of interest in that country, but it was especially a school in which they might learn caution, for there were many languages spoken in it which they were wholly unable to affiliate. The descent of the greater part of the Caucasian tribes was a subject of the utmost difficulty, into which he could not now enter; but he might mention a fact he had observed in reference to one of them, the Imeretians, as indicating their ancestry—it was the peculiarly thick and rough character of their hair. He believed it testified to their African descent, as asserted by Herodotus, and showed that two or three thousand years had not sufficed to comb straight the woolly hair of the negro. This

appearance of their hair was quite unmistakeable when attention had been directed to it; it struck the gentlemen who were travelling with him quite as forcibly as himself. The hair, however, was the only negro characteristic about them; their features were in no way negro. As to Mingrelia, he considered it to be the finest country in the world, both in the physical features of the land and in the remarkable beauty of its inhabitants. It was a paradise of beauty; neither a plain woman nor a plain man were ever to be seen in it. He recommended those who wished for a pleasant trip to go to the Black Sea and take a run in the Caucasus. They might depend on it they would enjoy the excursion far more than a season spent among the German baths.

After some remarks by Mr. DANBY SEYMOUR, M.P.,

The CHAIRMAN, before adjourning the meeting, wished to announce with respect to China that another expedition was contemplated, and he read the following letter he had received from Mr. Baring, dated Aug. 3, 1861:—

“With respect to your letter of the 17th of November last, submitting for favourable consideration a proposal from Captain E. Smyth, of the Bengal army, to conduct an exploring expedition into Chinese Tartary, I am directed by Sir Charles Wood to inform you that the Government of India have sanctioned—subject to the reply which may be received to a letter addressed by them to Mr. Bruce, Her Majesty’s plenipotentiary in China—the proposed expedition, under the conduct of Captain Smyth; and that they have placed under him Lieutenant Jackson of the Bengal Engineers, Dr. J. L. Stewart, an accomplished botanist, and Mr. Joseph Medicote of the Geological Survey.

“The Asiatic Society of Bengal has been requested to furnish any information, and to offer any suggestions that may be serviceable to the expedition; and I am directed by Sir Charles Wood to add, that any suggestions which the Royal Geographical Society may have to offer, will be forwarded to the Government of India, to be communicated to Captain Smyth, in the event of the reply from Mr. Bruce being satisfactory,* and the exploring party not having started at the time of their receipt.”

In addition to that letter he had received one from Mr. Medicote, the geologist of the expedition, entering more fully into their proposed route, and stating that, while they awaited an answer from Mr. Bruce, they should be very glad of suggestions or other information from people of science in this country.

The CHAIRMAN then drew attention to recent maps of Russia, which were lying on the table, and concluded by stating that the Grand Duke Constantine, who was also the President of the Imperial Geographical Society of St. Petersburg, and was now in England, had given him authority to state that no part of the geography of Russia which was known to H. I. Highness should remain unknown to the geographers of England. He also mentioned that Lütke, the aide-de-camp of the Grand Duke and son of Admiral Lütke, was present.

The meeting was then adjourned to November 25th.

Second Meeting, November 25th, 1861.

The EARL DE GREY AND RIPON in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*The Rev. S. F. Creswell; Sir John Kirkland; Major Alexander Strange; Jonathan S. Crowley, C.E.; and John Thrupp, Esqrs., were presented upon their election.*

ELECTIONS.—*Capt. Frederick Campbell, R.N.; the Earl Cawdor; Capt.*

* Intelligence has reached the Society that Mr. Bruce’s answer is unfavourable.
—Ed.

H. Christian, R.N.; Sir Charles Clifford; Major-Gen. A. F. Cunynghame, C.B.; Capt. Charles Dick; the Earl of Donoughmore; Rev. William Ellis; Capt. Robert J. Hendry; Commr. A. Hiley Hoskins, R.N.; Sir James J. Randall Mackenzie, Bart.; Capt. Rochfort Maguire, R.N.; Lord Rollo; Don M. F. Paz Soldan; Lord Talbot de Malahide; Viscount Templeton; William C. Baldwin; James Bishop; Henry Blanshard; Julius Brenchley; William Burges; Herbert Davies, M.D.; E. Brown Fitton; Julian Goldsmid; F. Gover; Daniel Grant; D. Clewin Griffith; John Heugh; Deane J. Hoare; John Hollingsworth; John Holms; William Johnson, R.N.; J. Pryce Jones; Edward Lane; John W. MacLure; Richard Mann; William S. F. Mayers; Joseph Milligan; Frederick J. Mouat, M.D.; Robert Owen; George H. Pinckard; David Reid; James Searight; William J. Sharpe; Jervoise Smith; R. J. Spiers; Markham Spofforth; Joseph W. Tayler; William Ursher; Edward H. Walker; J. William Walker; J. Harrison Watson; Charles J. Wingfield, and James A. Youl, Esqrs., were elected Fellows.

The Papers read were—

1. *Exploration of Central Australia.* By J. MACDOUALL STUART, F.R.G.S., and Gold Medallist.

MR. STUART left Chambers' Creek on the 1st of January, 1861, with eleven men and forty-nine horses. The first part of his journey was tedious and difficult, owing to the dryness of the country, of which he complains severely. He says, at the Finke's Springs on March 3rd, "I am now in daily expectation of the equinoctial rains, and then I hope to be enabled to push on without further loss of time. The last month has been dreadful slow work; but it has proved the country passable at any season." The first shower fell on March 16th, at the Hugh Springs, and on the 20th his party began to be embarrassed by heavy rains and the consequent boggi-ness of the ground. He passed Mount Centre on the 6th of April, and reached Attack Creek (the place where he was attacked and repulsed by the natives in his previous journey) on the 25th of April: thenceforward his exploration of new country fairly commenced.

On the 29th of April he arrived at a fine grassy creek with abundance of water, which he called Tomkinson Creek. It formed a station, whence he subsequently made three attempts, in different directions, to reach the northern coast, and where, on the present occasion, he left two of his tired horses to recruit, until the time of his homeward journey.

Four days of travel onwards, brought him to the commencement of large open plains, stretching out of sight to the north, and bounded on the east by a ridge of hills, running also to the north-